



Sleights Church of England
(Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Mental Health Policy

November 2024

*Working together to be happy; to flourish; to succeed
through our Christian values
perseverance, respect and trust.*

This policy intends to outline the policy and procedure for developing positive mental health approaches at Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School.

In our Church school, our vision is to “work together to be happy; to flourish; to succeed”. This policy intends to outline how our whole school community lives this out in relation to developing positive mental health approaches.

Our Christian Values of are firmly rooted in this policy.

Christian Value	How is this value lived out in our Mental Health policy?
Perseverance	<i>I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me</i> (Philippians 4:13) We recognise that maintaining positive mental health and behaviour across school is an ongoing process, reliant on the dedication, understanding and commitment of all stakeholders. Perseverance involves not giving up and trying our very best to support, promote and maintain positive mental health and wellbeing.
Respect	<i>So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you</i> (Matthew 7:12) The Church of England Vision for Education outlines a desire for children to be educated with dignity and respect. This is a key driver for this mental health and wellbeing policy, as we believe that children deserve both dignity and respect when learning about behaviour. In turn, respect for all adults within the school community is promoted. We recognise that for some children, there could be a number of barriers to positive mental health and wellbeing and it is our role as a school to identify these and implement strategies to remove and support these.
Trust	<i>My God is my strength in whom I trust</i> (Psalm 18:2) Our mental health and wellbeing policy is built on the foundations of trust, dignity and respect for our children, staff and all stakeholders.. At Sleights, we establish environments and relationships based on trust to treat each other as we would wish to be. Furthermore, children trust that their problems are dealt with, their voices heard and they can see things improved and supported for them.

The Church of England's Vision for Education references whole heartedly the aspiration to educate the whole child: “I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly and in all its full ness” (John 10:10)

The same Vision articulates the principle of education for dignity and respect, referencing:

“the basic principle of respect for the value of preciousness of each person, treating each person as a unique individual of inherent worth” (Church of England, Vision for Education)

The key principle and rationale of this policy is to outline, within the teaching of Jesus and the Church of England's Vision for Education how positive mental health and wellbeing is promoted across Sleights Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School.

In line with the teaching of Jesus and the Vision for Education, we believe that it is essential that all children are shown that they are cared for and respected across school. Educating the whole child also includes teaching children about mental health and wellbeing.

Policy Statement

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization)

At Sleights, we are immensely passionate about our school vision and ensuring that children and the whole school community experience this and live it out in full. This policy clearly states how our Christian Values are implemented in relation to mental health and promoting this positively.

In addition, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupil body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils.

In addition to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, we aim to recognise and respond to need as it arises. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health and wellbeing policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly, and indirectly by mental health and wellbeing issues.

Scope

This document describes the school's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. This policy is intended as guidance for all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our medical policy in cases where a pupil's mental health and wellbeing overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue and the SEND policy where a pupil has an identified special educational need.

The policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing in all staff and pupils
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert staff to early warning signs of poor mental health and wellbeing
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health and wellbeing issues
- Provide support to pupils suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents/carers

Lead Members of Staff

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote the mental health of pupils. Staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

- Scott Grason-Taylor (Headteacher) - Designated Child Protection Lead and Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead
- Helen Louise Hann – Deputy Designated Child Protection Lead

The school also employs a trained Mental Health Wellbeing Nurse and Play Therapist – Mel Randell

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the Mental Health Lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm, then the normal child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Headteacher or Deputy Designated Child Protection Lead. If the pupil presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

Where a referral to CAMHS is appropriate, this will be led and managed by the Headteacher.

Individual Care Plans

At Sleights, working with other professionals, we draw up an individual care plan for pupils causing concern or who receives a diagnosis pertaining to their mental health. This should be drawn up involving the pupil, the parents and relevant health professionals. This can include:

- Details of a pupil's condition
- Special requirements and precautions
- Medication and any side effects
- What to do, and who to contact in an emergency
- The role the school can play

Teaching about Mental Health and Wellbeing

The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE curriculum.

Our PSHE curriculum teaches mental health and wellbeing across two blocks. Each block is approximately half a term in length. These are timetabled at different points during the year to support recall and revision of key information.

The content is clearly identified in our knowledge and skill progression documents across each phase in school and centres on:

- **Healthy Lifestyles:** Physical and Emotional Health
- **Emotional Health and Wellbeing:** Identification and Strategies

Additional content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching, but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance and information from the Local Authority to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.

Signposting

We will ensure that staff, pupils and parents are aware of sources of support within school and in the local community. We will display relevant sources of support around school and promote information on the newsletter, as appropriate, and will regularly highlight sources of support to pupils within relevant parts of the curriculum. Whenever we highlight sources of support, we will increase the chance of pupil help-seeking by ensuring pupils understand:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with Scott Grason-Taylor, the Headteacher and Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead.

All staff have received mental health awareness training in order to support them effectively identify signals and signs that may cause alarm.

Possible warning signs may include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating / sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour

- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Lateness to or absence from school
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Managing disclosures

A pupil may choose to disclose concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff so all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

If a pupil chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Staff should listen, rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the pupil's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?' From the training that has been provided to school staff, exploration of issues will be undertaken using the language of "I have noticed", or "I wonder if", this enabling children to not feel threatened by questioning, but reassured by someone noticing and describing how a child maybe feeling.

The school's behaviour policy explores the notion that all behaviour is communication. The staff at Sleights, therefore, see their role as investigators within supporting behaviour, including mental health, as identifying causes of behaviour.

All disclosures should be recorded in writing and held on the pupil's confidential file. This written record should include:

- Date
- The name of the member of staff to whom the disclosure was made
- Main points from the conversation
- Agreed next steps

Records are made and kept on CPOMS.

This information should be shared with the mental health lead, Scott Grason-Taylor, who will provide store the record appropriately and offer support and advice about next steps. A CAMHS referral, or referral to Compass may be explored.

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regards to the issue of confidentiality. If we it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a pupil on then we should discuss with the pupil:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a pupil without first telling them. Ideally, we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent. Particularly if a pupil is in danger of harm.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Lead, this helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the pupil, it ensures continuity of care in our absence and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the pupil and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents should be informed if there are concerns about their mental health and wellbeing and pupils may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the pupil should be given 24 hours to share this

information before the school contacts parents. We should always give pupils the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the Headteacher or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents we should consider the following questions (on a case by case basis):

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? At school, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the pupil, other members of staff.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information and give them leaflets to take away where possible as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too e.g. parent helplines and forums.

We should always provide clear means of contacting us with further questions and consider booking in a follow up meeting or phone call right away as parents often have many questions as they process the information. Finish each meeting with agreed next step and always keep a brief record of the meeting on the child's confidential record.

Working with All Parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to get about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

At least annually, we also hold workshops for families, working alongside their children in class. These workshops focus on promoting aspects of positive emotional health and wellbeing. The sessions are co-taught with class teachers and led by the Play Therapist. Family support is always very positive for these events.

Supporting Peers

When a pupil is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends. Friends often want to support but do not know how. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Support will be provided either in one to one or group settings and will be guided by conversations by the pupil who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing / saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

The school has a team of Wellbeing Leaders to promote and support positive emotional health and wellbeing.

Training

As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training in order to enable them to keep pupils safe. Recent training has included whole school staff awareness of promoting positive mental health and a focus session, led by CAMHS on risk taking behaviours. More specialist training for specific need has been given to the Headteacher/Mental Health lead.

The MindEd learning portal provides free online training suitable for staff wishing to know more about a specific issue. This can be accessed by staff at any point who may wish to develop knowledge and understanding further.

Training opportunities for staff who require more in-depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more pupils.

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with the Headteacher, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in November 2027.

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. If you have a question or suggestion about improving this policy, this should be addressed to Scott Grason-Taylor, the Headteacher and our mental health lead.

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.